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SUBJECT: BORDER STRATEGY COORDINATION CONFERENCE IN  
DUSHANBE

¶1. (U) This is an action request see paragraph 6.

¶2. (SBU) During a meeting with the EU's Council Working Group on Eastern Europe and Russia (COEST) on February 28 in Brussels, the EU asked A/S Boucher whether the United States would support a border management coordination conference in Dushanbe in October, possibly organized by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Relevant bureaus at State and other agencies agree on the potential utility of such a conference.

¶3. (SBU) Background. Last year, the French Embassy in Dushanbe offered to host a conference on a border management strategy during France's upcoming EU presidency. Embassy Dushanbe convinced the French that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe would be a better host, because it already had a fairly well developed border management strategy project; the 56 member States include potential conference donors, the Central Asian states and Russia; and Afghanistan is a partner. Embassy Dushanbe has convinced Organization officials in Tajikistan that the conference should present a more or less agreed strategy, developed by Organization experts and the Tajik Government. The conference would seek donor buy-in for the strategy as well as participation in its implementation.

¶4. (SBU) The situation, however, is complicated by the ongoing debate on the mandate of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Center (field mission) in Dushanbe, which is set to expire in June. The Tajik Government has proposed a new mandate, with greater Tajik control over the Center's activities, while reducing the Center's ability to pursue market reform and strengthen democratic institutions. The Finnish Chairman-in-Office has prepared its own draft mandate, which the Tajik delegation has rejected. Several European governments are considering an approach that insists the Tajiks accept a full mandate or the Center will close.

¶5. (SBU) USEU and Embassy Paris are requested to convey to appropriate officials U.S. support for a border strategy coordination conference in Dushanbe drawing on the talking points in paragraph 6.

¶6. (SBU) Talking Points:

-- The U.S. supports holding a border management coordination conference in Dushanbe in October.

-- We believe the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe would be best suited to host the conference, because of its ongoing work with the Tajik Government on a national border management strategy.

-- To maximize the benefit of the conference, the U.S. proposes that Organization experts and the Tajik Government develop a strategy, to be presented at the conference. The conference would then seek donor buy-in for the strategy as well as participation in its implementation.

-- However, a final decision to hold the conference in Dushanbe would depend on the decision of the Tajik Government to renew the mandate of the Organization's field mission, which expires in June.

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